

WORSHIP

SEEKING THE FATHER IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

A Pastor's Perspective

BY STAN TOLER



NEWSPAPER COLUMNIST, LORI BERGMAN TOLD OF ATTENDING A FUNERAL FOR HER DAUGHTER'S FRIEND IN WHICH THE MOURNERS RAN

THE GAMUT FROM PUNK TO PREPPY. She said the service concluded with a hymn and the teen friends of the deceased held hands while they struggled to mouth the words of the song, *O God, Our Help in Ages Past*. Even in grief the assortment of cultures, genders and generations merged around the lyrics that proclaimed God's care in the midst of their catastrophe.

More than simply a meeting time, worship is a meeting place - a place where people can come in from the cold of their 21st century lives, with its awful anonymity and self-seeking, into the warmth of God's presence and the welcome of God's people. For that defining moment, they long to focus on something other than credit card balances, layoffs, auto repairs and test scores.

So, I'd like to suggest the obvious: **WORSHIP NEEDS PRAYERFUL PLANNING.** The goal of any congregational gathering requires clear identification, and especially in worship settings God's clear direction is a necessity and the needs of the participants warrant consideration. God is, after all, a God of order. The planets in our solar system didn't just find the first available parking place.

Chaos bowed to a plan. If people are going to come together in worship, they really do need a spiritual parking place. As Paul said, "Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way." (1 CORINTHIANS 14: 40)

Further, may I remind you that **WORSHIP CALLS FOR DILIGENT PREPARATION.** Can you imagine Aaron and his Israelite praise team questioning the tabernacle worshippers, "Does anybody have a special they'd like to sing today?" No, Aaron and his associates were leading people into the very presence of Jehovah. Everything was specifically designed and prepared to bring honor to Him. True, we must always be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit at any time and in any place. But often, His leading comes to us as we seek His guidance in the preparation stages of a worship encounter.

And then, as I see it, **WORSHIP OUGHT TO BE PLEASANT.** By that I mean worship isn't a time to draw the swords of song style preference, sequence of elements or scripture translations. It's a time to come together. Worship leaders and planners are required to ask, "How can we enable our people to join hearts as well as voices?"

Finally, we must accept that **WORSHIP IS, AND RIGHTLY SHOULD BE, POWERFUL.** God is in the midst of the praises of His people and, as simple as it sounds, if we don't acknowledge His presence, we can never say

High Praise and Quiet Thoughts

BY STEVEN FRY



MANY THINGS CAN MOTIVATE US TO REACH OUT TO OTHERS - THE DESIRE TO SEE BROKEN PEOPLE MEND-

ED, THE ACHE TO SEE OUR NATION MORALLY REJUVENATED, THE IMPULSE TO RESIST DARKNESS IN EVERY SECTOR OF OUR SOCIETY. But the only motivation for ministry that lasts a lifetime is that which flows out of a passion for God. How can we maintain such passion? How do we cultivate an intimate relationship with God? How can we develop a keen sensitivity to His voice and an understanding of His ways? By worshipping Him.

All effective ministry flows out of an intimate relationship with God, and that relationship is first and foremost cultivated through worshipping Him. Unless we spend time waiting on Him, allowing His Holy Spirit to create within us an appetite to know Him, we will eventually lose our desire to share His love with others. We'll find our hearts slowly drifting, our vision unclear, our ministries tedious... responding to God more out of duty than desire. We can find ourselves like the church at Ephesus to whom



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Perspective (continued from page 1)

that the sanctuary was really full no matter how many are in attendance. I love it when the lights rattle once in a while; when the pew bolts get loose from time to time; and when on occasion we get the power surge we've come to expect. Worship is a God thing, and where He walks the heavens thunder and the mountains blow their top!

We all come to worship with expectations. The preacher asked the little group on the platform for the children's sermon what they expected God to do for them. One little fellow raised his hand and stated, "I expect Him to get me out of here by noon!"

What do you expect God to do for you, and through you, this week?

STAN TOLER IS SENIOR PASTOR OF TRINITY CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE IN OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA, AND HOSTS THE TELEVISION PROGRAM, "LEADERSHIP TODAY." FOR THE PAST TEN YEARS HE HAS TAUGHT SEMINARS FOR INJOY GROUP — A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE. TOLER HAS WRITTEN OVER 40 BOOKS, INCLUDING HIS BEST-SELLERS 'GOD HAS NEVER FAILED ME, BUT HE SURE HAS SCARED ME TO DEATH A FEW TIMES AND THE FIVE STAR CHURCH.

High Praise (continued from page 1)

Jesus said, "I know your deeds, your hard work ... Yet, I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love." (REVELATION 2: 2, 4) Good works, unless they are fueled by a passion for God, can actually generate apathy and burnout. Any real authority in evangelism wanes because there is so little joy within us attracting unbelievers.

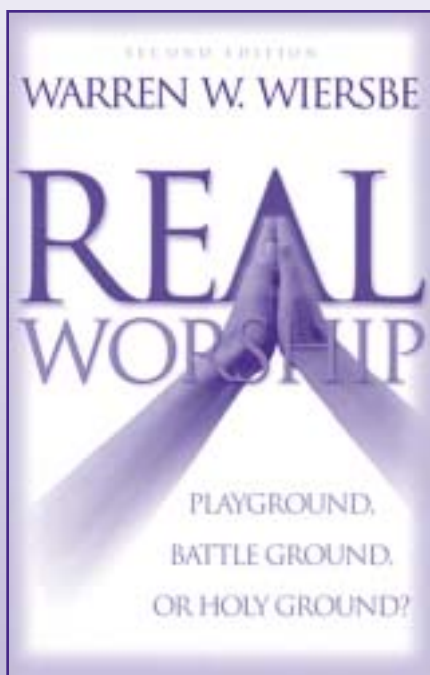
Worshipping God is a primary key to knowing Him. When the heavens unfolded before Isaiah, he was awestruck by the vision of Divine Majesty and the sound of fiery seraphs exclaiming, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory." (ISAIAH 6:3) Think of it! These angelic creatures have repeated this refrain for millennia past counting! What could ever motivate them to worship so? How could anyone, anything, sustain this intensity? Could it be that every time they worship Him, God reveals something of Himself they have never seen? Enrapturing them so that they exalt Him all the more? Which then moves God to reveal even more of Himself? Oh, the knowledge of God is inexhaustible; all the fascinating intricacies of His character and nature never ending! There will always be something to discover about God. No wonder we will worship for eternity! It's a lifestyle of worship that opens our hearts to know Him, and it's knowing Him which fuels our passion to make Him known to others.

Worshipping God makes us sensitive to His promptings. That's why worship is intricately linked with prayer and intercession. Without meaning to, we can find ourselves praying our own agenda, about the things we feel are important. Yet, one of the great secrets to effective intercession is to understand God's thoughts about a given situation and pray accordingly. Scripture clearly states that God's ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts. We need to know His thoughts, and that kind of sensitivity is cultivated in worship. Worship and intercession are inseparable. When breathing, we inhale and we exhale. Intercession is like exhaling. We pray out certain things, believing that God will act according to the prayers He has prompted through us. But if all we do is exhale, we'll run out of air in a matter of moments. No, there must be a rhythm between exhaling and inhaling. F.B. Mayer once said, "Try breathing out three times without breathing in." Spiritually, we inhale when we worship God. Through the act of worship we receive fresh grace, fresh insights into God's character and the release of faith to believe Him for His promises. It is that which gives us the ability to exhale in intercession. Attempting to pray without worshipping God will ultimately drain us of enthusiasm for prayer.

STEVEN FRY IS A CONFERENCE SPEAKER, AUTHOR, WORSHIP LEADER AND SONGWRITER WHOSE SONGS INCLUDE "OH, THE GLORY OF YOUR PRESENCE", "JESUS, YOU ARE MY LIFE" AND "OH, I WANT TO KNOW YOU MORE." THIS ARTICLE IS ADAPTED FROM, "THE LIGHTHOUSE MOVEMENT HANDBOOK", COMPILED BY DR. CORNELL HAHN, © 1999, REPRINTED BY PERMISSION OF MULTNOMAH PUBLISHERS, INC.

Digging Deeper

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The average worshiper probably doesn't realize the tensions that exist within a well-planned worship service. To begin with, there is a tension between the individual and the collective. We worship as individuals, but we are a part of the assembly, and we must neither lose our individuality nor cause others to lose theirs.

Most people are content to be spectators, not participants; and sometimes those who do participate have a tendency to take over.

There is also a tension between the heritage of the past and the needs of the present. It's not enough merely to repeat an ancient ritual week by week or day by day; what we do must have a bearing on what we're experiencing right now. There is nothing wrong with ritual so long as it doesn't degenerate into ritualism. Ritual can beautifully preserve meaning and experience for us, or it can substitute for meaning and experience. If each new generation doesn't understand

what's being said and done, the ceremonies accomplish nothing.

At the same time, we must beware of novelty, which is simply change for the sake of change. While the ultra-traditional church is busy protecting its roots but perhaps not producing any fruits, the avant-garde congregations are cutting themselves free of their roots and becoming tumbleweeds that are "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine." (EPHESIANS 4:14, KJV) Both extremes must be avoided.

One of the greatest dangers is that we "use" worship in order to accomplish something else other than to glorify God in the edification of His church. We do not worship God in order to achieve peace of mind or to solve our personal problems, although these may be blessed by-products of worship. We worship God because He commands us to do so and because worship is the holiest experience of the Christian. God is worthy of our worship, and that's all we really need to know. If our motive is anything other than this, then we are "using" God and practicing a refined form of idolatry.

TOP TEN REASONS Worship will be a priority for me in 2001

10 I need the interaction with other believers. I'm strengthened and encouraged by associating, fellowshipping and worshipping with them.

9 My day goes better - feels more adjusted - when I've spent private time in Bible study and worship. Likewise, my week is more focused when I've been a part of a congregational gathering.

8 I actually learn more about God when I seek Him with all of my heart. I'm reminded of His attributes when I speak and sing of His acts. And I rediscover His character when I speak and sing His names.

7 There are many in my congregation longing for this type of revelation concerning God. Though none of us will ever comprehend all there is to know about God, I want to help others see Him more clearly.

6 Uninhibited, honest worship by sold-out believers is the strongest form of evangelism to the seeker that I know of. After all, they're looking for something bigger than and beyond themselves to invest their lives in.

5 John 4 says that God is looking for worshippers; not style, not format, not performance. Just me.

4 King David, King Solomon and the prophet Isaiah left us accounts too vivid and inspiring to overlook. I want that kind of encounter with God.

3 Beyond encounters or experiences, though, deep down I really want God Himself.

2 HE ASKS FOR IT.

1 HE DESERVES IT.

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IN THE SHADOW OF THE ALMIGHTY

A Responsive Scripture Arrangement based on Psalm 91



LEADER: He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

CONGREGATION: I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

LEADER: Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence.

CONGREGATION: The LORD is our refuge.

LEADER: He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge.

CONGREGATION: The LORD is our fortress.

LEADER: His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

CONGREGATION: We trust in God.

LEADER: If you make the Most High your dwelling - even the LORD, who is my refuge - then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent.

CONGREGATION: The LORD is our refuge!

LEADER: For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.

CONGREGATION: The LORD is our fortress!

LEADER: You will tread upon the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.

CONGREGATION: We trust in God!

LEADER: "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.

EVERYONE: He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."

(From ACTS OF WORSHIP by Wyatt and Miller, c. 1995. Lillenas Publishing Company)

RELATED HYMNS: *God Leads Us Along; Great Is Thy Faithfulness; Hiding in Thee; His Eye Is on the Sparrow; How Firm a Foundation; It Is Well with My Soul; O God, Our Help in Ages Past; Praise to the Lord, the Almighty*

RELATED WORSHIP SONGS: *God Is Great, God Is Good; God Is the Strength of My Heart; Praise the Name of Jesus; The Steadfast Love of the Lord; You Are My All in All; You, Oh Lord, Are My Refuge*

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The Worship of God is the Highest Calling of the Believer

The way we begin our day usually sets the tone for the hours that follow. Early morning thoughts of God, and quiet moments of devotion before the rush begins help tune our hearts to see the world as He sees it and to respond to others as He would.

To help reinforce this concept with your congregation, introduce “A New Day Dawns” by having a soloist sing verse 1, choir or praise team singing unison on verse 2, divide into parts on verse 3, and invite the congregation to join on verse 4. Include this insightful new hymn in a medley or worship sequence with these hymns and worship songs:

- All Creatures of Our God and King • Morning Has Broken • My Life Is In You, Lord •
- Open Our Eyes, Lord • Take My Life (Holiness) • Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus •

A New Day Dawns

1. A new day dawns _____ at Your com - mand,
 2. Too of - ten, Lord, _____ we start the day
 3. Re - solved to start _____ each day with prayer,
 4. May Your light shine _____ thro' - out this day,

A pre - cious gift _____ from Your own _____ hand.
 With - out a tho't _____ of what You'd - say _____
 We'll take Your gift, _____ use it with _____ care.
 In all we think _____ and do and _____ say;

O give us eyes _____ that we might see
 Thro' us if we _____ would ful - ly _____ give _____
 With - in the grasp _____ of Your strong hand
 And with full hearts _____ we now will _____ raise _____

— What You have willed _____ for us to be. _____
 — Our lives to You _____ each day we live. _____
 — We'll do the work _____ that you have planned. _____
 — Our song, our lives _____ to You in praise. _____

WORDS: RON SPRUNGER
 MUSIC: Traditional English Melody

O WALY WALY
 L.M.

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The Worship of God is the Highest Calling of the Believer